



## 2015 Squaw Creek Allotment

### NMFS Monitoring Report

**Prepared by:** Brianna Goehring, Range Management Specialist  
Bart Gamett, South Zone Fish Biologist

**Date:** February 16, 2016

**Contact Information:** Brianna Goehring, 208-879-4130, [bjgoehring@fs.fed.us](mailto:bjgoehring@fs.fed.us)

#### (1) Overview of proposed action and actual management (livestock numbers, on-off dates for each unit, etc.).

See Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 below for permitted use and authorized use, including authorized livestock numbers, grazing rotation, and actual use for 2015.

A notice of non-compliance was issued in 2012 for excess use and failure to follow the scheduled grazing rotation. Twenty percent of livestock numbers were suspended for 2014 through 2017 for excess use in 2013 and 2014. Running T Cattle, LLC, waived its permit to East Fork Ranches, LLC, and thus is no longer a permittee with the Salmon-Challis National Forest. Hence only East Fork Ranches, LLC placed cattle in the Treavor Creek, Upper Squaw Creek, and Kinnikinic Units, and only Howard and Zella Cutler placed cattle in the Juliette and Happy Hollow Units. East Fork Ranches, LLC did not turn out the numbers waived to it from Running T Cattle, LLC, for 2015.

Livestock did not graze on the west side in the Upper Squaw Creek Unit after August 15 to protect spawning bull trout and their redds. (Livestock may cross Martin Creek (in Upper Squaw Creek Unit) only before August 15.)

**Table 1. Permitted use.**

Permittee	No. and class	Season of use	Head months
East Fork Ranches, LLC	236 cow/calf	6/16 – 9/30	830
Running T Cattle, LLC	237 cow/calf	6/16 – 9/30	834
	60 cow/calf	7/16 – 9/30	152
Howard and Zella Cutler	142 cow/calf	7/16 – 9/30	359



**Table 2. Authorized use for 2015.**

Permittee	No. and class	Season of use	Head months
East Fork Ranches, LLC	189 cow/calf	6/16 – 9/30	665
Running T Cattle, LLC	190 cow/calf	6/16 – 9/30	668
	60 cow/calf	7/16 – 9/30	152
Howard and Zella Cutler	114 cow/calf	7/16 – 9/30	289

**Table 3. Unit rotation for 2015.**

Unit	Number of cow/calf pairs	On-date	Off-date
Trealor Creek	379	6/16	7/7
Upper Squaw Creek	379	7/8	8/31
Juliette	379	7/16	8/22
Happy Hollow	174	8/23	9/30
Kinnikinic Creek	379	9/1	9/30
Lower Squaw Creek	Rest		
Riparian Pasture (No grazing)	0	No grazing	No grazing

**Table 4. Actual use for 2015.**

Unit	Number of cow/calf pairs	On-date	Off-date
Trealor Creek	189	6/16	7/7
Upper Squaw Creek	189	7/8	8/1
Kinnikinic Creek	189	8/2	8/25
Juliette	75 cow/calf pairs, 6 bulls	7/16	8/22
Happy Hollow	75 cow/calf pairs, 6 bulls	8/23	9/4
Lower Squaw Creek	0	Rest	Rest
Riparian Pasture (No grazing)	0	No grazing	No grazing

**(2) Date and location of any specific SCNF implementation monitoring data collected, including monitoring required under Terms and Conditions of the Biological Opinion.**

See Table 5 for dates and locations of implementation monitoring.

**(3) Results from all implementation and effectiveness monitoring identified as part of the proposed action and the Biological Opinion, including required annual use indicator monitoring (e.g., stubble height, riparian shrub utilization, streambank alteration), photo point monitoring, seral condition, streambank stability, water temperature, sediment, and width to depth ratio.**

See Tables 5 below for implementation monitoring. Woody browse use measured at 59% on willow; however, the sample size was 16 with a confidence interval of +/- 13%, so this was not considered a missed standard. No effectiveness monitoring was done in 2015.



**Table 5. End of season monitoring results for 2015 (implementation). All results are rounded to the nearest whole number.**

Unit- Creek Date monitored	Monitoring attribute	Allowed standard	End of season results
Trealor Creek Unit- Trealor Creek 9/14/15	Greenline stubble	$\geq 6''$	11''
	Streambank alteration	$< 20\%$	10%
	Woody browse use	$30^A$ or $50^B$	14%
Trealor Creek Unit- Squaw Creek 9/16/2015	Greenline stubble	$\geq 6''$	8''
	Streambank alteration	$< 20\%$	5%
	Woody browse Use	$30^A$ or $50^B$	17%
Kinnikinic Creek Unit- Kinnikinic Creek 10/13/2015	Greenline stubble	$\geq 6''$	3''
	Streambank alteration	$< 20\%$	20%
	Woody browse use	$30^A$ or $50^B$	17%
Upper Squaw Creek Unit- Martin Creek 9/14/2015	Greenline stubble	$\geq 4''$	12''
	Streambank alteration	$< 10\%$	4%
	Woody browse use	$30^A$ or $50^B$	13%
Juliette Unit- Juliette Creek 9/22/2015	Greenline stubble	$\geq 6''$	5''
	Streambank alteration	$\leq 20\%$	35%
	Woody browse use	$30^A$ or $50^B$	23%
Happy Hollow Unit- Juliette Creek 9/22/2015	Greenline stubble	$\geq 4''$	4''
	Streambank alteration	$\leq 20\%$	4%
	Woody browse use	$50^B$	59%



Unit- Creek Date monitored	Monitoring attribute	Allowed standard	End of season results
Lower Squaw Creek Unit- Squaw Creek  9/16/2015	Greenline stubble	≥ 6"	11"
	Streambank alteration	< 10%	1%
	Woody browse use	30 <sup>A</sup> or 50 <sup>B</sup>	11%

<sup>A</sup>Single-stemmed species such as aspen. <sup>B</sup> Multi-stemmed species such as willow and alder.

**(4) Discussion of any unauthorized use and/or any maintenance issues related to fences or water developments.**

No unauthorized use was documented in 2015 in the Squaw Creek drainage (Trealor Creek, Upper Squaw Creek, and Lower Squaw Creek Units). Per communication with a permittee of East Fork Ranches, LLC on November 20, 2015, an electric drift fence near the head of Cash Creek, which forms the northern boundary of the Kinnikinic Creek Unit, failed to manage livestock movement in the Kinnikinic Unit which likely contributed to the missed stubble height standard at the designated monitoring area in that unit. In the November 20, 2015 meeting, the East Fork Ranches, LLC permittee stated that the fence was in the process of being rebuilt with barbed wire and agreed to visit this drift fence with Forest Service staff prior to livestock turnout in 2016 to inspect it.

**(5) Brief review of allotment management and compliance successes and failures.**

**Successes.** Implementation monitoring from this year showed the best compliance in the Squaw Creek drainage (Trealor Creek, Upper Squaw Creek, and Lower Squaw Creek Units) from 2011 to present. No cattle were found out of place throughout the grazing season in these areas, and all annual use standards (stubble height, streambank alteration, and woody browse utilization) were met in the related designated monitoring areas at the end of the grazing season. Monitoring in Lower Squaw Creek Unit confirmed rest from livestock grazing of that unit. A portion of the log-worm boundary fence that separates the Squaw Creek Allotment from the Garden Creek Allotment to the north (between the Upper Squaw Creek Unit and the Willow Patch Unit of the Garden Creek Allotment) was completed by the permittees. This combined with riding prevented unauthorized use from Garden Creek Allotment cattle into Upper Squaw Creek Unit or vice versa.

**Failures.** The stubble height standard was missed in the Kinnikinic Creek Unit, and both the stubble height and streambank alteration standards were missed in the Juliette Unit. The missed standard in the Kinnikinic Creek Unit is partially attributed to a failed drift fence (see item 4 above). The East Fork Ranches, LLC permittee has concern that the monitoring site also is not an appropriate site as it is located in a constricted area not far above the Forest Service/BLM boundary. This permittee agreed to inspect the



site with a Forest Service Range staff in June 2016 to assess appropriateness of the monitoring site. This permittee identified that maintenance of the Cash Creek drift fence (see item 4) might help livestock management enough to meet standards in this unit. The permittee also said another possible solution would be to leave open the Forest Service/BLM boundary gate, which is located to the south of the monitoring site, to allow cattle to drift off the allotment rather than congregate near the monitoring area but that this would require coordination with BLM. East Fork Ranches, LLC, received a notice of non-compliance, dated February 2, 2016, for exceeding the allowed stubble height standard in the Kinnikinic Creek Unit.

The missed standards in the Juliette Unit may be due to inappropriate stocking rate or because cattle must trail back through this unit to leave the allotment. The ranch manager for Howard and Zella Cutler and Forest Service staff committed to looking at this monitoring site together this summer. A letter of further suspension is pending to Howard and Zella Cutler for the exceeded standards at the time of the writing of this report.

- (6) Any relevant information that becomes available regarding Snake River Basin steelhead or spring/summer Chinook salmon habitat trends and/or spawning locations that would modify the assumptions made in this Opinion or result in effects not considered.**

No additional information became available in 2015.

- (7) A clear description of compliance with the terms and conditions contained in the Incidental Take Statement (items 1a through 1j and items 2a and 2b in the Biological Opinion, pgs 55-57).**

*1a. The proposed action, including all described conservation measures, monitoring, and adaptive management processes are implemented as described in the Biological Assessment and proposed action section of this Opinion.*

Conservation measures were implemented. All end-of-season monitoring of stubble height, streambank alteration, and woody browse utilization occurred between mid-September and mid-October on the Squaw Creek Allotment.

*1b. The extent of incidental take is not exceeded by ensuring streambank alteration levels, along Squaw Creek where Snake River Basin steelhead redd trampling is expected to occur (within Lower Squaw Creek and Treavor Creek Units), do not exceed the following levels at any time during the identified Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period for the action areas (June 16 to July 7):*

- (1) 10% in units where streambank stability conditions are less than 75% of the identified RMO for that unit;*
- (2) 15% in units where streambank stability conditions are 75% to 99% of the identified RMO for that unit;*
- (3) 20% in units where the bank stability RMO is being met.*



All streambank alteration standards were met in the Lower Squaw Creek (rested) and Trearlor Creek Units although streambank alteration monitoring occurred on September 14 and 16, 2015 in these units.

*1c. Each unit with potential Snake River Basin steelhead redd trampling (i.e., Lower Squaw Creek and Trearlor Creek Units) will contain at least one DMA, that is also located in an areas where the risk of cattle trampling of redds is highest.*

There is at least one DMA each in Lower Squaw Creek and Trearlor Creek Units.

(c.2) Monitoring of streambank alteration by SCNF trained staff occurred at two Trearlor Creek Unit DMAs on September 14 and 16, 2015. This monitoring occurred after the timeframe identified in the B.O. (the B.O. identified two weeks after moving cattle off the unit or by July 7, whichever comes first) because of workload constraints of SCNF staff. Lower Squaw Creek Unit was rested this year, and that rest was verified with field visits and monitoring of streambank alteration.

*1d. To further reduce redd trampling potential within Squaw Creek within the Squaw Creek Allotment (in Lower Squaw Creek and Trearlor Units), where redd trampling is highest, the proposed adaptive management process (Appendix A) is immediately triggered if streambank alteration at the end of the Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period (July 7) is (1) >5% when streambank stability is less than 75% of the RMO; (2) >10% in units where streambank stability is 75% to 99% of the RMO; or (3) >15% when the streambank stability is being met.*

Yes

*1e. The allotment permittees or their employees receive training to appropriately implement the move triggers in the proposed action.*

Yes.

*1f. Annual meetings are conducted with the permittee to discuss specific actions necessary to protect vulnerable spawning areas in stream reaches with the highest potential for cattle interaction with Snake River Basin steelhead spawning fish and/or redds (Lower Squaw Creek and Trearlor Creek Units).*

Multiple meetings occurred with the permittees. These occurred prior, during (FS staff met permittees in the field), and after the grazing season to discuss the 2015 grazing season.



*1g. Frequent riding (twice per week) is implemented in the Lower Squaw Creek and Trealor Creek Units during the Snake River Basin steelhead incubation period (June 16 to July 7), with the intent to reduce cattle use within and adjacent to potential Snake River Basin steelhead spawning habitats in these units.*

Per communication with the East Fork Ranches, LLC permittee, East Fork Ranches had riders in the Trealor Creek Unit every other day at a minimum while cattle were in that unit.

*1h. On units where trampling of steelhead redds may occur (i.e., Lower Squaw Creek and Trealor Creek Units), permittees inspect and repair fencelines intended to keep livestock within intended unit boundaries before turnout onto those units.*

No compliance issues relating to the improvements and developments mentioned above were observed in 2015. Two troughs had been identified for replacement in the Trealor Creek Unit. Per conversation with the East Fork Ranches, LLC permittee on November 20, 2015, these troughs did not get replaced but were maintained instead.

*1i. All exclosures, drift fences, and water developments that reduce cattle use adjacent to streams with ESA-listed fish species are properly maintained and functioning as intended.*

No compliance issues relating to the improvements and developments mentioned above were observed in 2015. The East Fork Ranches, LLC permittee reported that an electric drift fence failed in the Kinnikinic Creek Unit, see #4 above, where there are no listed fish or designated habitat.

*1j. Turnout dates, move triggers, and end-point indicators, as well as responsible parties, are outlined in the grazing permit's annual operating instructions to the permittee.*

Yes.

*2a. The DMA or MIM on each unit that is annually authorized for use is annually monitored to determine compliance with all annual use indicators identified in the proposed action. The report shall also identify any modifications to move-triggers or annual indicators that result from implementing the adaptive management strategy.*

Yes.

*2b. An end-of-year report is available to NMFS.*

Yes, see this report.



**(8) Any management recommendations for subsequent years.**

Grazing within the Squaw Creek drainage was very successful this year with no non-compliance observed.

All permittees continue to be under suspension for the 2016 season with reduced livestock and/or days authorized from what is permitted. Field reviews are recommended for both the DMAs (Kinnikinic Creek Unit and Juliette Unit) where standards were exceeded to gain information about why these exceedances occurred and to inspect improvements related to these two DMAs. To the respective permittees, a notice of non-compliance was issued in February 2016 for the missed standard in the Kinnikinic Creek Unit and a letter of further suspension was issued in February 2016 for the missed standards in the Juliette Unit.